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called into action by the most trifling accident.

Thus then in a few words we account for this disease. The present state of society furnished its members with a portion of leisure, which few of them have yet learned to employ. Yet the human mind requires continued employment. The man of intellect finds it in philosophy and science; the man of fortune in pleasure; the ambitious man in court intrigues; the military man in the conduct of a campaign. Those who have neither taste nor ability for such enjoyments, remain equally in need of mental excitement, and we need hardly stop now to prove that excitement even of a painful kind is by far more agreeable to the mind than perfect apathy. It is sufficient to have shewn that even the horrors of superstition are gladly embraced by those who have nothing else to afford the necessary stimulus. Thus religious fanaticism takes its rise, and spreads through society with a surprising rapidity, of which we have endeavoured to elucidate the cause.

It remains to say a few words on the effects resulting from this disease at the present time; for we shall omit mentioning those abominable specimens of the madness of the human mind, the crusades against the infidels in the holy land; the massacre of the protestants in the reign of Henry the fourth of France, with many other things equally detestable. At the present day the effects are more moderate, but they are more permanent. Men do not now commit horrid massacres, or engage in extravagant crusades; but their follies, though less destructive, are no less absurd and ridiculous. When the mania is at its height, there is nothing too wild or too gross for the poor wretches labouring under it. At one time they have inflicted flagel-

lation on themselves; and have been known even to go farther than this. At another time they amuse themselves most devoutly, and think to propitiate the deity, by the exercise of jumping. Sometimes they see visions, converse with angels, or fight with the devil. The lowest and most ignorant of mankind have been brought by this disease to think themselves qualified to become the instructors and spiritual guides of their fellow creatures. The beauty of the human soul has been disfigured by it; and every receptacle of insanity is filled with its victims. In short there is no pitch of absurdity, extravagance, brutality, or misery, to which it has not brought mankind.

In conclusion we may observe, that if a sound mind in a sound body be one of the greatest blessings of life, how necessary it is for us to avoid what will so materially injure both of them. Let us entertain rational sentiments of piety toward our creator and almighty benefactor; let us shew our gratitude to him by sedulously performing our duties as men, and by avoiding that which would tend to lessen the dignity of the worship which is due from us all, as reasonable beings towards him.

Edinburgh.

Θ. Λαγας

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

GENTLEMEN,

IT has been matter of surprise to me, that the subject of Bible Societies has not more occupied the attention of some of your liberal correspondents; and that the language of some of the individuals at the last meeting of the parent society in Dublin should have escaped without animadversion. The confidence, if not to say arrogance, which was there displayed, well deserves castigation, particularly as the institu-

tion itself is one of the most illiberal and exclusive which has made its appearance in this country since the ages of Monkish bigotry and superstition. No doubt whatever remains with me, but it was the expiring spirit of "No Popery" making a last effort in this country, and that the prime movers in it are actuated by the most unworthy motives. What concerns me most, is to see many well meaning persons drawn into the vortex, unknown to themselves, or at least without any suspicion of the invidious tendency of it; upon that principle alone I have attempted the following exposition of it, which, if consistent with your general plan, I would like to see inserted in your respectable work.

Bible Societies have now become so much the order of the day, that not to be a member, or at least a subscriber to them, is reckoned almost anti-christian; the newspapers teem with reports of their proceedings, and many well-disposed persons, lest they should be charged with Deism or Atheism, have, without consideration, lent themselves to one of the most invidious institutions which ever has arisen in this country. My astonishment has been excited to find, that in this age of growing liberality of sentiment on religious matters, that no person has stepped forward for the purpose of unmasking this institution, and of showing it to the world in its true colours. The consequence has been, that numbers have given their aid and countenance to it, who would have been very far from encouraging it, had they known the principles and intentions of the principal movers in the system: and a confidence has been gained by some of the latter, that, from the silence of all opposition, the principle is invulnerable, and they have been hardy enough

to avow, in the most public manner, that they are sorry it has not provoked discussion. Now, I am determined that such sorrow shall not be of a long continuance, as I shall use my humble endeavours to open a discussion, whether it may be followed up or not.

From the first introduction of Bible Societies into this country, I have looked upon them as impugning by a side wind the Catholic religion, and that the principal end in view by many of its most powerful supporters and promoters, was to throw a shade over the characters of the clergy of that church; to endeavour to excite a jealousy between them and the laity, by which means no doubt they had sanguine, but very ill-founded hopes, that a great defection in the Catholic church would be brought about. Allow me here to say, that such persons would have been serving the cause of religion much more essentially, had they, by giving instruction to their own flocks, prevented them from following after fanatical itinerant preachers, and by the assiduous performance of their own clerical functions, raised themselves so much in the estimation of their several congregations, that they would have preferred them to worthless characters to whom they have attached themselves. They would have shown more friendship to the cause of true religion, by preventing their own sheep from straying, than by such means to endeavour to seduce the Catholics from the religion of their forefathers; and I must here observe, that they have verified the case of the dog in the fable, they have lost the substance by snatching at the shadow.

The establishment of Bible Societies, and the attempt at distributing Bibles among Catholics, have been new means of attempting to confirm the aspersions thrown out

and industriously circulated on the Catholic clergy, who have been stigmatized with having a strong predilection for keeping the laity in ignorance; that it is not only the desire of the clergy, but it is the genius of the Catholic religion itself, to repress every inclination in the laity towards the acquirement of knowledge. This mischievous and unfounded calumny has been so frequently and so vehemently inculcated on the laity of other persuasions, both publicly and privately, by their clergy, that it is now laid down, and received as an incontrovertible fact, that the Catholic clergy are averse to their people reading the Bible, lest they should thereby discover and detect the errors of the Church of Rome; than which nothing can be more untrue, for though there are unfortunately many very grossly ignorant persons among the Catholic body, that ignorance is neither attributable to the Catholic clergy, nor to the Catholic religion, but to a cause for which those who consider themselves enlightened, those who pretended to profess the true religion of Christ, and who did not hesitate to brand the Catholics with idolatry, are to blame: that cause was the abject poverty to which the Catholics were reduced by the nefariously unjust and oppressive laws and statutes under which they have laboured for at least four-fifths of the last century. This was the cause of that ignorance so much to be lamented, and from which they have not yet recovered. The people who had property were deprived of it, and the laws were such as to preclude the possibility of any among them obtaining property, either by their industry or by their ingenuity.

Since the abrogation of such of those laws as affected the lower and middle classes, the Catholics have made rapid progress towards wealth

and opulence; they have proved themselves neither deficient in ingenuity, industry, nor perseverance; nor can it justly be said, that they discover any repugnance towards obtaining information for themselves or their children. I am perfectly convinced, that no people have a stronger desire for learning, than the native Irish, nor would any people go greater lengths to obtain it; of which no better proof can be adduced, than the bare mention of those poor scholars, who have been known to wander over the country, in pursuit of that education, which, from the poverty of their parents, they were unable to procure at home: and those very persons who have been so unjustly accused of a wish to keep their people in darkness, have uniformly been the persons most ready to assist those wanderers in their laudable pursuits. Among those who have the means in their power, we find as much willingness to obtain for their children a liberal education, as is discoverable among the Protestants; therefore, if the Priests have the desire to prevent them from having education, it must be allowed, that they have not the influence.

Another weak and foolish assertion has been made, that to make Protestants of Catholics, you have only to instruct them, for that it is impossible for a well informed man to adhere to the Catholic religion. Now, among the many bright ornaments to literature and science which have arisen among Catholics, of how many converts to Protestantism can the establishment boast, or how many of the same have embraced that purest of all pure religions, the Presbyterian? I believe I might answer myself, and say, to the latter not one, and to the former very few indeed. Were the Protestants to put at the head of the list the

celebrated Kirwan, I believe they might end it with the insertion of Crawley; the latter has been, for so far, no otherwise celebrated, than for the noise that has been made about his turning his coat, not, I am convinced, for his conversion, for, from the character of the man, I am led to believe he is now as good a Catholic as ever he was, never having much to boast of in that way, and that he is a no better Protestant than he would have been a Mussulman, had that happened to have been the established religion of the country where he abjured that which he had professed, and in which he would have still continued, had his ambition and his avarice been gratified by being elected to a superior station, for which his vanity led him to believe he was fit. As much noise was made about the apostacy of this man, as if the Pope and all the Cardinals, with the Doctors of the Sorbonne at their backs, had become Protestants: and I am sure, there was much more rejoicing over this poor sinner, than if all the Catholic hierarchy had abjured their religion, for in such a case the church might *indeed* have been in danger, as some of her sons might have been pushed from their stools, which would completely have counterbalanced the joy at such a violent stab being given to the Church of Rome.

When a man abjures the Catholic religion, and throws himself into the bosom of the Church established, I think there is strong grounds for suspicion, that pecuniary interest is more consulted than conscience. There would be much better reason to give him credit for adopting one of those many religions, for which there is no temporal bribe, than to praise him for joining one where there are so many lures thrown out for renegadoes.

That the clergy look upon the

Church as their inheritance, and have reduced religion to a trade, must be obvious to the most casual observer; it must be equally plain, that the temporal emoluments which are attached to appointments in the church, are the only inducements for those men to become the advocates of religion; when, therefore, we hear the cry, that "the Church is in danger," we may safely conclude, that the clergy are apprehensive for these pecuniary interests, and that religion has nothing to do with the matter, as the interest of religion, and the safety of the church, are completely involved in the temporal interests of the clergy.

In many parish churches in this country, the whole congregation consists of the rector, the parish-clerk, and the sexton; and very possibly those who profess to belong to it, are engaged in running after some itinerant fanatic, yet so long as the parish pays tithes to the clergyman, and salaries to his two assistants, the interests of that church are safely preserved; but were any circumstance to arise, whereby there might be danger that they would be mulcted of a part of their emoluments, or deprived of them altogether, then would the hue and cry be raised, of the church being in danger, and as much clamour would be excited, as if the Grand Turk and the Great Mufti were at our doors, ready to overturn the government, and to establish Mahometanism on the ruins of the Protestant Church. On the other hand, give the clergy of the establishment the tithes and church-lands, and those of the Presbyterians the Regium Donum, without fear of being deprived of them, and they will leave their people to the management of Methodists, Evangelicals, or any others that may take the trouble off their hands. In fact, the spiritual

concerns of the church, and the pecuniary interest of the clergy, have long been so identified and involved with each other, that when the temporal interests of the clergy have been at risk, by their ingenuity they have contrived to make the people believe that it was the interest of religion alone, which induced them to set up the "Church in danger" cry; yet when it evidently appears, that from the inattention or moral turpitude of the clergy, numbers have quitted communion with them, choosing rather to follow after some enthusiastic preachers, no apprehension on the score of danger to the church is expressed, but they are content to go through the forms of religion to empty pews, and deserted aisles, without complaint.

In consequence of the Catholic clergy not joining in Bible Societies, it is inferred, that they do not approve of their laity reading the Bible, and the charge of wishing to keep them in ignorance is reiterated. Now the projectors of those Bible Societies could not be ignorant, that the Bible which they were disseminating among the people was not approved of by the Catholic clergy, inasmuch as it was not considered by them either to be a pure translation, or to contain all the canonical books which are now forthcoming: either of which reasons must be allowed to be good grounds of dissent from entering into an association which utterly refused to circulate the Bible recognized by Catholics. But the Catholics have another ground equally strong, on which they refuse to meet the Bible Societies, and that is, a difference of opinion with respect to the real importance of the Bible, as being the supreme authority to which to refer all matters of controversy: a point which the Bible Societies appear to have laid down as

a principle on which is founded the institution. The Protestants also contend, that in the Bible, as *they* have it, is contained every point necessary to the salvation of mankind, and that every person reading it, and understanding it as his judgment or reason may dictate to him, may, in that case, be the arbiter of his own fate, and that not as he understands it in any particular manner, but as he reads and understands it himself, will he stand or fall. The Catholics agree not with them on either of those points: they hold, that the Bible, not containing all points necessary to man's belief, nor to his salvation, it cannot be allowed to be that supreme authority to which to refer all matters of controversy, nor to be all sufficient as an instructor to Christians. Protestants, and Protestant Dissenters, have adopted many doctrines and points of faith, which are not to be found in the Scriptures as they now stand in their version; for instance, keeping lent, and a belief in the Athanasian creed according to the Protestant's; infant baptism, and keeping the sabbath on the first day of the week, instead of the seventh, practised by *all*, Protestants and Dissenters; what part, or parts of the Bible authorize these practices? No part, I am certain. Of the Athanasian creed, there is not a single word in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelations; as to baptism, by every sentence in the Book relating to it, the person was ordered to be taught before he was baptised; the word Lent does not occur in the whole book, and every part which relates to the sabbath, orders it to be kept on the seventh day. Here are some important doctrines, which are held by those who say the Bible is all sufficient, and which they must have had from another source, for in the Bible they are not to be found; they must therefore

either hold unnecessary and erroneous doctrines, or otherwise the Scriptures are extremely defective, and by no means contain all points necessary for man's belief or salvation.

On reading the Bible carefully I observe that allusions are made in many places to books which are not now forthcoming; must we not therefore conclude that the books so alluded to are lost? And if the scriptures were given to man as a Revelation of God's will, must not the parts we now have be incomplete without those which are lost? A few examples I shall mention. Though it may be found, that about twenty books which are quoted in the Bible we have, are not to be found, I shall make fewer instances answer the purpose. In the book of Numbers we read in chap. 21, v. 14, "It is said in the book of the wars of the Lord," we have no such book. In the first book of Kings it is said, "Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs, and his canticles were one thousand and five." In second Chronicles we have "Now the rest of the acts of Solomon are they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah, and in the vision of Iddo." The first book of Chronicles ends with these words, "now the acts of David the King first and last are they not in the book of Samuel the Seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet and in the book of Gad the Seer." In the last to the Colossians, St. Paul orders them to read in the Church "the epistle from Laodicea," he also says in the first to the Corinthians, "I wrote you an epistle;" if we had this one it would have been the first. St. Matthew quotes Jeremy the prophet for words spoken by him concerning Christ, which words are not now to be found in that book as we have it; St. Matthew must have

made a blunder, or else that part of the book is lost. Matthew also says it was spoken by the prophets "that he shall be called a Nazarene," this must also be an inaccuracy, or the books wherein Christ was called a Nazarene must be lost.

If we had all the books which are here alluded to, it would be a vast addition to the Bible; and a question arises whether the one half itself remains; Solomon's thousand and five songs, if we are to judge by those we have, would in all likelihood themselves be as large as all the present edition of the Bible. Now if all this was judged necessary by Almighty God as a revelation of his will, and it would not be very reverent towards him to suppose that he would do an unnecessary act, there must be a vast deficiency in our Bible at present, and it is no wonder that so many doctrines and points of faith are held by Christians which are not to be found in the Bible as it at present stands. Well may the Catholics say that it cannot contain all points, and therefore ought not to be admitted as the supreme authority to decide all matters of controversy between them and the Protestants; and the Catholics have as good a right to look up to their church for authority for holding any doctrine they have adopted, as the Protestants have to quote the Bible in opposition to them; the Protestants holding doctrines which are no where to be found in the Bible. On this ground also are the Catholics perfectly justifiable in withholding themselves from all interference in these Bible Societies; for if they did join with them they must avow principles which are inconsistent with their own religion, inasmuch as the Bible which is circulated by those Societies is not considered by them a pure or faithful translation, and also that it does not

contain all that is necessary for the faith and salvation of mankind.

The Protestants reject as uncanonical several books which by the Catholics are received as authentic; for my part I can perceive no authority they have to reject those books, which the Catholics have not to adopt them; they have the opinion of the Council of Trent for those they call apocryphal being canonical, and what authority they have to differ with that Council it lies with them to shew; for if any thing is contained in those books which is favourable to the Catholic doctrines, it is but a miserable subterfuge to rate them as apocryphal on their own authority, when they bow to the authority of that Council for the others being canonical. The Protestants rejecting seven books as apocryphal, and about twenty being lost which are quoted in our Bible, the Protestant Bible must be far short of what it was at one period; and therefore are Catholics perfectly justifiable in assuming that the Bible not containing all points, should not be taken as a complete rule and guide of our faith.

This is a doctrine however, which very well suits the conveniency of the majority of the pensioned clergymen. When they have it once settled as a point, that the Bible is sufficient as the guide and rule of faith for their people, there is no more to do for them. Give them a cheap Bible and all is done; they are able to find their own way to heaven without further interference of the clergy, who will have nothing more to do than to enjoy themselves and spend their incomes in mirth and jollity; but I would ask them what is to become of those unfortunate persons who cannot read the Bible, or who is to lend them a helping hand to make their way to Heaven; as has been lately set forth in a

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small publication, entitled, "An Address to the Synod of Ulster." Not the Presbyterian clergy, for they neither preach to nor pray for any who do not pay them, and unfortunately it is generally those who cannot read, who are unable to pay. Now in this respect as has also been said by the author of the address above alluded to, the Catholic clergy have a decided advantage over many of the promoters of Bible Societies; for if their people are both incapable of reading and paying, still they will get instruction, and will not be left in the dark to grope their way.

From what has been said, I hope I have convinced every unprejudiced person, that the Catholic clergy have not shewn any dereliction of duty, by declining to become members of Bible Societies; but that they have acted purely, and consistently with their religious principles; and I also hope that I have proved, that those clergymen who have been the great promoters of the Bible Societies, would have been spending their time to much better purpose, by applying the funds towards the education of those who cannot read, and in giving a little more time to the religious instruction of those who can neither read nor pay for instruction.

I am your obedient servant,

NO PHARISEE.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE PASSAGE OF THE CHANNEL BETWEEN IRELAND AND SCOTLAND.

THE arrival in port of the present passage-boats, is during the ebb-tide nine times in ten; and there is much risk of being carried past their harbour by it; in which case, it cannot be recovered before the
